

## A & S HENRY & CO LTD - MANCHESTER

**Barrie Williamson**

In 1783, Alexander Henry emigrated from Ireland to America at the age of 17. Over the next 20 years he established himself as a merchant in Philadelphia. He was joined there by his two nephews, Alexander and Samuel, who both worked for him in his business. In 1804 he sent his younger nephew Alexander back to England to take advantage of the upsurge of the cotton industry. In 1805 the youngster opened offices in Manchester where he was joined by his brother Samuel and they found A & S Henry & Co becoming involved in the marketing and distribution of cotton goods. They were helped in this by having a ready market in America established by their uncle.



Over the next years they expanded rapidly opening branches in Bradford, Belfast, Leeds, Huddersfield, Glasgow and Dundee in order to cover all aspects of the textile industry and to act as collecting stations, although the main distribution centre remained in Manchester. In 1836 they opened a huge warehouse and office complex covering one complete block at 32/40 Portland Street (just

off Piccadilly) Manchester where they stayed until bombs demolished it on Christmas Eve 1940.

The various branches handled different textiles during the 1800's and early 1900's were as follows:-

Manchester	- cotton goods	Belfast	- Irish Linen
Leeds	- woollen goods	Glasgow	- Scottish textiles
Huddersfield	- fancy cloth trade	Dundee	- jute (sacking)
Bradford	- worsted goods		

Each of these branches expanded over the years and built the company into a large empire.

In 1840, Samuel died in a fire on the steamship Lexington from New York to Providence during one of his frequent business trips to America. In 1862 Alexander Henry died and his sons, Mitchell and John, carried on the company. Nothing can be found of John who seems to have disappeared from the scene leaving the running of the company solely to Mitchell making him a very wealthy man. He carried on until the company went public when he moved into politics being one of the richest men in England at the time and also one of the most generous. He eventually spent most of his money on his estate in Ireland and when he died in 1910 he left just £425.

The company flourished and when they were bombed out in 1940 they moved to Bridgewater House, 60 Whitworth St, Manchester 1 where they remained even after the Portland St site was re-developed after the war. The company also had a retail outlet in Manchester called Henry's Stores Ltd, at 95-101 Market St until it was demolished to make way for the Arndale Centre. They had a mail order business run by John Noble Ltd, Manchester. The company was eventually taken over by Great Universal Stores in 1972.

Now to get to the reason for this article, my cover with a perfined A&S/H (A5100.02) sent to Bordeaux from Manchester 21<sup>st</sup> January 1932 with a crest on the back flap reading S & C Nordlinger, 18 Lloyd St, Manchester and also stamped on the back 40 Portland St. S & C Nordlinger were shipping agents for A & S Henry and had their main office at 18 Lloyd St but they also used office space in the Henry warehouse at 32/40 Portland St and obviously used some of the Henry stamps while they were there. Problem solved I think.